

SIKKIM

GOVERNMENT **GAZETTE**

**EXTRAORDINARY
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Government of Sikkim
Office of the PCCF-cum-Secretary
Department of Forest, Environment and Wildlife Management
Forest Secretariat, Deorail, Gangtok -737102, Sikkim

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NOTIFICATION

Dzongu Ecotourism Promotion Zone

WHEREAS, for most of the indigenous people living adjacent to the Khangchendzonga Biosphere Reserve, farming of large cardamom (*Ammomum subulatum roxburgh*) is the only source of cash income, and over the last few years, this crop has been severely affected due to severe borer and viral disease attack. The income of the household is dependent on this single livelihood option. The biggest challenge is how to diversify the farm income by providing diversified options for income generation. It is essential to provide sustainable livelihood options to the local community so that they do not resort to unsustainable practices. Hence it is proposed to promote the Dzongu Ecotourism Promotion Zone within the Khangchendzonga National Park for incentive programmes such as community based ecotourism.

AND WHEREAS, though community based ecotourism is an important source of seasonal income for the villagers residing in remote areas. The impacts of unmanaged tourism are accelerating the rate of destruction in areas, which were once regarded as inaccessible. The negative impacts of unplanned tourism like deforestation due to the use of firewood, unhygienic sanitation, garbage accumulation, smuggling of plants and animals have to be regulated and at the same time the benefits arising from this enterprise equitably shared. Unplanned tourism also threatens sensitive and biologically important high altitude wetlands.

AND WHEREAS, Baseline Habitat surveys were conducted during July and August 2006 jointly with the Mutanchi Lom Aal Shezum (MLAS) local NGO, Forest Department and The Mountain Institute covering the Tholung Kishong Trek. During this survey critical wildlife habitats were identified at Dawathong, Thepa la (north east), Thepa la (south west) and Panch Pokhri (Lungdho Nay) for Himalayan Tahr, Alpine Birds, Medicinal Plants and Musk Deer respectively. Subsequently consultations with the villagers was organized at Dzongu based on which these trekking routes have been finalized, ensuring minimum impact to wildlife sensitive habitats and at the same time providing alternative livelihoods to the local community.

AND WHEREAS, the Tholung valley has long featured in the legends and lores of the people of Sikkim. Its name literally means "the hiding place of relics". The Tholung Sacred Zone also comprises of important holy sites such as *Dumlong Nay*, *Tholung Monastery*, *Shinji Badong*, *Kong chachu*, *Thyugong Buti Nay*, *Kishong Tsho*, *Dawathong Tsho*, *Shingo Tsho* and *lungdoh Nay* which fall along this nature trail. These places are still visited by large numbers of pilgrims and need to be safeguarded.

Now therefore in exercise of the powers conferred by clause (b) of section 33, read with sub-section (8) of section 35 and sub-section (2) of section 36A of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 (53 of 1972), clause (d) of section 76 of Indian Forest Act 1927 (16 of 1927), and clause (i) of sub-section (2) of section 83 of the Sikkim Forests, Water Courses And Road Reserve (Preservation And Protection) Act, 1988 (6 of 1988), the State Government hereby notifies the Dzongu Ecotourism Promotion Zone in North Sikkim district comprising of one approved trek namely Tholung Kishong Trek with nine designated camping sites. These are as follows:

1. Designated Nature Trails and designated campsites for ecotourism

Following treks, nature trails and campsites are being notified in the Dzongu Ecotourism Promotion Zone in North Sikkim.

1 Tholung Kishong Trek
Entry Point: Bay
Exit Point: Passingdang, Tingvong, Upper Dzongu
And vice versa
The nature trail from Bay and passing sequentially through Chana, Lombong, Rinchhen, Dumlung, Dhokhim, Sakaam stream, Tholung monastery, Thyugong Buti Nay, Temrong forest log house, Jumthul chu bridge, Phyaguteng cliff, Tholpe, Dikithong, Mighet la, Dawathong, Upper Luduchu, Shingo lake, Thepa la, Panch Pokhri, Lum cave, Rungli kyong, Kalyokbi ridge, Dryong Puno, Dongmu, Leek (or Tingvong)
The permitted day treks include Tholung Gumpa to Kong Chachu (hotsprings), Tholupe herder's camp to Kishong Lake. This trek passes through important **holy places** namely Dumlong Nay, Tholung Monastery, Shinji Badong, Kong chachu, Thyugong Buti Nay, Kishong Tsho, Dawathong Tsho, Shingo Tsho and Lungdoh Nay under the Tholung Kishong sacred zone. This trek passes through the **wildlife sensitive habitats** namely the Dawathong Himalayan Tahr Conservation Zone, Thepa la (north east) Alpine Birds Conservation Zone, Thepa la (south west) Medicinal Plants Conservation Zone and the Panch Pokhri (Lungdoh Nay) Musk Deer Conservation Zone. Pack animals (horses, dzos and yaks) are not permitted within the national park during this trek. Lighting fire or cooking food is permitted only at the designated campsites and not during day treks. Tholung monastery, Temrong forest log house, Tholupe herders camp, Dikithong herders camp, Dawathong herders camp, Upper Ludu chu, Lower Thepa la, Lungdoh Nay herders camp, Dryong Puno

2. Ecotourism Promotion Plan

(A) Ecotourism Promotion Initiatives

- (1) Publicity of these regulations by installing adequate signages at Gangtok, Mangan, Sangkalang, Passingdang, Bay, Leek, Tingvong and near the trekkers huts, camping sites and conservation area.
- (2) Publicity of these regulations by taking out press release and adding it into correlated website like, forest department.
- (3) Informing the travel agents, Panchayats, JFMC/EDC and local NGOs about these regulations.
- (4) Provide feedback forms and also web enabled feedback to the trekkers so that they can provide feedback on their trekking experience.
- (5) Training and capacity building of Ecotourism Service Provider's, travel operators, panchayats, JFMC/EDC, Himal Rakshaks and local NGOs about these regulations.
- (6) Designating the boundaries of the camping sites on the ground and providing basic amenities in the camping sites like running water, alpine toilets and kitchen cum porters barrack.
- (7) These ecotourism promotion initiatives should be incorporated into the existing schemes and programmes of the Khangchendzonga National Park and Khanghendzonga Biosphere Reserve in order to provide adequate funds for implementation of this zonation and conservation management plan.
- (8) The Tourism Department and other organizations and agencies may also support in the promotion and development of the Dzongu Ecotourism Zorte in North Sikkim.

(A) Ecotourism Regulations

- (1) Movement of visitors and support staff is prohibited outside the designated nature trails and designated camping sites.
- (2) Lighting of fire, cooking and "hot lunch" is not permitted on day treks.
- (3) Movement of pack animals (horses, dzos and yaks) is prohibited within the national park.
- (4) Respect holy sites, local traditions and customs, as this will help in preserving the rich heritage of our composite culture.
- (5) The "code of conduct" or conservation code for trekking in forest areas has been notified by the State Government under the "Sikkim Wildlife (Regulation of Trekking) Rules 2005". The punishment and penalty for violation of the same has also been detailed therein.
- (6) These ecotourism regulations shall be enforced by the forest officers in coordination with the Ecodevelopment, Joint Forest Management Committees, Panchayats and Himal Rakshaks.
- (7) Other than forest officers, the Ecodevelopment Committees (EDC), Joint Forest Management Committees (JFMC), panchayats, registered Non Governmental Organizations (NGO), *Himal Rakshaks* and the trekking service providers shall be authorized to detect offences under these rules and arrest the offender if there is reason to believe that he will abscond. Any person so arrested shall be handed over forthwith to the nearest forest/wildlife office.

3. These provisions shall apply in addition to the laws relating to forests, environment, wildlife and biodiversity.

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